

THE GREAT
Duty of Communicating
EXPLAIN'D and ENFORC'D,
THE
Objections against it Answer'd,
AND THE
Necessary Preparation for it Stated.
WITH
DEVOTIONS
To be U S'D
Before, At, and After,
THE
Lord's Supper.

By the AUTHOR of
The Duties of the Closet.

The Eighth Edition.

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ture and Reason. From
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From *Prov.* 10. 19.

TO HIS
PARISHIONERS.

Dear Neighbours,

IT being my Design to settle a Monthly Sacrament among you, beginning from Easter-Day now at hand; I cannot satisfy my self without endeavouring by all ways in my Power, to dispose and prepare you for a constant Attendance at it. For which End I send you this little plain Book, which contains the Sum of all that is necessary for you to know, and all that I have already preached to you on this Subject. And I most earnestly beseech, intreat and require you, (as you will answer it at the Great Day, when Men must give a strict and severe Account, how they have us'd those Means and Opportunities of being acquainted with their Duty, which have been offer'd to them, especially by the Hands of their Spiritual Teachers and Pastors,) to peruse and consider it, with the same Seriousness and Concern for your Souls, with which I call God to witness, it was written. And, if it should not reach all your Scruples, and answer all your Difficulties, I beg of you that you will let me know wherein you shall remain unsatisfied, that so I may give you such farther Helps and Directions,

To his Parishioners.

as shall appear to be needful. This, as it will shew your Sincerity and honest desire of coming to the knowledge of the Truth, as it is in Christ Jesus, so will it likewise be the shortest and surest way of your coming at it; it being impossible, by Writing or Preaching, to give the same exact and speedy Resolutions to the Doubts and Difficulties of particular Persons, as by verbal Conferences; wherein they have the satisfaction of putting their Case, and hearing it answer'd in their own way. May it please God, of his great Goodness, so to excite, direct and bless your Endeavours, in this, as well as in all Religious Matters, that you may adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, and by so doing, Glorify God, make your Calling and Election sure; and fulfil the Joy of,

Your most Faithful,

Feb. the 20th.
1699.

and most Loving Pastor.

23 JY60

T H E

THE GREAT DUTY OF Communicating, &c.

CHAP. I.

Of the Nature, End and Design of the Lord's Supper, the Benefits which Christians are made partakers of by receiving it, and the obligations which they lie under to receive it.

IN order to a full and clear understanding of the Nature of the Lord's Supper, we shall do well seriously and particularly to consider the Account which the Scriptures give us, of our blessed Master's Institution of it. And this by comparing together *Mat. 26. Mark 14. Luke 22. 1 Cor. 11.* we shall find, in short, to be this.

Our Blessed Saviour, when he was eating the Passover with his twelve Apostles, the evening before his Passion, took Bread, and gave thanks, or blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to them, saying, *Take, eat, This is my Body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the Cup after Supper, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my Blood of the New Testament (or the New Testament in my Blood) which is shed for you and for many: This do in remembrance of me.*

For the better explaining of which words, and ascertaining the extent of their Obligation, we will distinctly consider these three things.

The Great Duty of

First, What it is that is here commanded to be done, Do this.

Secondly, Who the Persons are that are concern'd to Do this.

Thirdly, The End for which it is to be done, in Remembrance of me.

First, What it is that is here commanded to be done ; and this can be nothing else than what our Saviour and his Apostles had been just then doing, viz. taking Bread, and blessing and breaking it, and likewise taking Wine, and giving thanks, and partaking of and distributing both. To this, and every part of this action must the words do this necessarily refer ; because they immediately follow the doing of all this, and no part of this is excepted in our Saviour's Command. Those who are to provide and distribute, are to provide and distribute both Bread and Wine, for so had our Lord done ; and those who are to receive, are to receive both Bread and Wine, for so had the Apostles received. And therefore the Church of Rome is inexcusable, which directly contrary to our Lord's Institution, gives the Bread only to some Receivers without the Wine.

Secondly, Who the Persons are that are concerned to do this ; and they are all Christians whatsoever. By which I mean,

First, All Successions and Generations of Christians that shall be in the World, as long as it shall last. For they being all equally concerned in the benefits of our Saviour's Death and Passion, must according to reason be supposed to be equally obliged to keep up this Holy Supper in commemoration of them. So that if we had no Direction about this matter in Scripture, the reason of the thing itself must then have taken place, and that would have made this Supper perpetual. But the Scriptures have not been silent in this point, but have plainly told us, that we are thus to shew the Lord's Death, till he come : That is, till his second coming to judge the World.

Secondly,

Communicating explain'd.

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Secondly, All sorts of Christians, the *Laitie* or *People*, as well as the *Clergy* or *Ministers* of the Gospel. For tho' it is pretended by some, that because our Lord gave the Bread and Wine only to the Apostles, who were all *Ministers*, and not any one Lay-Disciple, therefore he design'd this Supper only for the Ministers of the Gospel, but not at all for the People; yet I think the contrary may very plainly be proved, both from Reason and Scripture: From Reason, both because it appears most probable that the Apostles, in the Institution of this Supper, were the Representatives of the People, and not of the Ministers, who were then much better represented by our *Great High-Priest Christ Jesus*, and whose Office it is plain he then alone executed; and likewise because it is certain, that the People, who are as much partakers of the benefits of Christ's death as the Ministers, have as great reason to commemorate 'em as they. From Scripture, both because it is evident from thence, that the Apostles constantly administered this Supper to the People, (as to give one Instance for all, we read *Acts* 2. 42. where we have no less than three thousand Lay Converts at once receiving this Supper) and likewise, because we there find *St. Paul* spending a great part of a Chapter in urging and directing the *Lay-Corinthians* how they ought to receive, *1 Cor.* 11.

'Tis true indeed, that the part which our Lord had in the institution of his Holy Supper, viz. *The blessing of Bread, and breaking it, and taking Wine, and giving thanks, and distributing both*, belongs only to the Ministers of the Gospel; because these are all special Acts and Exercises of the Ministerial Function, and as such, have been always reserved to them alone. But the receiving of the Bread and Wine, when broken, blessed and offered to us, is the common duty of all Christians, as well People as Ministers.

Thirdly, *The end for which this is commanded to be done, in remembrance of me, or rather in commemoration of me: For so the word, which we here*

translate remembrance, sometimes signifieth; and this indeed seems to be the most proper signification of it in this place. For *commemoration* is a solemn act of remembrance, and such an one, no doubt, our Saviour here expects from us. We are always bound habitually to remember him, but this *Supper* is particularly design'd to excite in our Souls a present and actual remembrance of him; of him, that is, of his Death and Passion, of his Body that was broken, and his Blood which was shed for us. For the Bread and Wine, which are here administred to us, were appointed by him as signs and representations of his Flesh and Blood, as he himself tells us, at his Institution of this Holy Supper; *This*, says he, speaking of the Bread, *is my Body which is given for you*; that is, this is a sign or representation of my Body, which shall very suddenly be offer'd up upon the Cross for you; and again, speaking of the Cup, *This is my Blood of the New Testament, or the New Testament in my Blood, which is shed for you, and for many*; as if he had said, the Wine which you now see in this Cup, and which I command ye all to drink of, is a sign or representation of my Blood, which will be shortly shed to ratify or confirm the New Covenant, which I have made between God and Man.

When therefore we eat of this Bread, and drink of this Cup, we must be sure to put both parts of our Lord's Commandment together, and fulfil both; by doing it in remembrance of his Body that was given, and his Blood that was shed for us. And such a remembrance as this necessarily implies these two things.

First, An acknowledgment of Christ for our Saviour and Redeemer. For what else is it to commemorate his dying for us, but to declare that we are sensible, that our peace is made with God, through the Blood of his Cross, and that we, who before were all under sin, and liable to wrath; aliens from, and enemies to God, shall now not have our trespasses imputed to us, but be saved from wrath through Christ, and in the body

body of his flesh through death be reconciled unto God. To declare, I say, and shew both to God and Man, that our hope is only in the Lord Jesus, who hath now appeared to put away sin by the Sacrifice of himself, and in whom alone we have redemption through his blood, even forgiveness of sins. This you see is what the Scripture means by Christ's Body being broken, and his Blood shed for us, and therefore all Christians who sincerely remember those, must sincerely acknowledge this.

Secondly, An acknowledgment of Christ for our Lord and Master: For, besides that, by submitting to his Rites and Institutions, we plainly declare our selves his Disciples: besides, that by acknowledging of, and partaking in his Sacrifice, we do, according to the Sense of all Nations, own our selves members of his Church; besides this, I say, by acknowledging Christ's dying for us, we do manifestly acknowledge our obligations both to love and obey him: To love him, who hath so loved us, as to lay down his life for us; to obey him, whose purchase we are, who hath bought us with a price, even the inestimable price of his Blood, and has therefore a right to us, as the Scripture tells us, as a peculiar people to himself. And this the Primitive Christians were so sensible of, that they look'd upon every receiving of the Lord's Supper to be a new tie and obligation, a new vow and dedication of themselves to Christ. And hence it was that the word *Sacrament*, which signified among the *Romans*, that Oath of Fidelity which their Soldiers took, was given as a name to the Lord's Supper, because Christians were suppos'd to bind themselves there, as it were by an Oath, to Christ's Service.

The Ends for which our blessed Lord instituted this holy Supper seem to have been these three.

First, *His Father's and his own Glory*; which could no way better be illustrated and extoll'd, than by making all Christians whatsoever join in ascribing their Redemption, and Salvation to them. For this is at once to own both their Power, and Wisdom,

and Goodness, which were so eminently display'd in these great works; and likewise their Sovereignty and Dominion over us, which are the natural effects of them.

Secondly, *The preserving the unity of the Church*, towards which nothing could contribute more, than the frequent meeting together of its Members, to acknowledge *one hope of their calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, above all, through all, and in them all*; and this is most effectually acknowledged, by our being *all partakers of that one bread*; for thus as St. Paul teacheth, *we being many are one Bread and one Body*. And likewise their meeting to commemorate the noblest instance of Love that ever appear'd in the world, and consequently the noblest Example for Christians to follow, the noblest motive to excite them to *love one another*.

Thirdly, The good and edification of every particular Christian; and this end will appear to be admirably well serv'd this way, if we will give ourselves leave to reflect a little on the benefits which every Christian is made partaker of by receiving this Holy Supper. And.

First, If we consider this Holy Supper, but as a *Commemorative Sign*, or sign to put us in mind of Christ's dying for us, yet even thus it will prove of vast advantage to us. For this will naturally tend to inflame our Love, and exalt our Gratitude towards him, to confirm our Faith and strengthen our Hope in him, and to fix and establish our purposes of obedience to him. All this, I say, will be the natural result even of a bare contemplation or remembrance of Christ's having freely given up himself to death, even the death of the Cross for us, and of his having thereby procured *remission of all our Sins*, and a promise of *Eternal Life and Happiness*, to all those that obey him. But,

Secondly, If we consider it, as it is *the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ*, that is, as it is to all faithful Christians an actual participation of the be-
nefits

nesses of Christ's death and passion, viz. of remission of sins, of the hope of eternal happiness upon our obedience, and of the grace of the holy Spirit to teach and enable us to obey, we shall be abundantly convinc'd of the advantage and benefit of it to us. By this means we have the same strength and nourishment convey'd unto our Souls, which the outward Symbols Bread and Wine convey to our Bodies. We are made one with Christ, and Christ with us, and nothing but our own wilful disobedience shall be ever able to part us more from him.

This is a true and faithful account of the Lord's Supper, which I think may be fairly summ'd up in these few and plain words. *It is a Federal Feast, or Feast of Covenant between God and Man, instituted by Christ himself, and perpetually to be observ'd by all Christians; where by partaking of Bread and Wine, in commemoration of Christ's Body given, and his Blood shed for them, they on their part acknowledge Christ for their Saviour and Redeemer, Lord and Master; and God on his part grants and confirms to them, under the Symbols of Bread and Wine, the Body and Blood of his Son Christ Jesus, that is, all the blessed effects of his Body broken and his Blood shed, viz. pardon of past sins, promise of eternal happiness upon future obedience of the Gospel, and Grace to direct and enable them to perform this obedience. And this Feast is therefore call'd the Lord's Supper, because it was instituted by our Lord at Supper time.*

From what has been said, I think our obligations to receive this Holy Supper do abundantly appear. For,

First, We have here a plain command so to do, *Do this in remembrance of me*; a command, as has been already shewn you, which reacheth to all Christians, and will oblige them, even to the end of the world. So that it is mere trifling with God, our Saviour and the World, to call our selves Christians, and yet live in a wilful neglect of this plain command of Christ. *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, saith our Saviour, and do not the things which I say? to what purpose do ye in words acknowledge me to be your Master, and yet*

when

The Great Duty of

when I call upon you to *do this*, plainly declare by your actions that you do not regard me? Better had it been for you that you had never taken my sacred name into your mouths, than that you should thus abuse and blaspheme it. *Be not deceived, I will not be mocked: But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sydon, at the day of Judgment, than for you.*

Secondly, This command of our Saviour is attended with a multitude of Circumstances, which do every one of them very much add to its force and obligation, and render the neglect of it more and more unpardonable. For,

First, *It was his dying Command*; that very same night, in which he instituted this Holy Supper, was he betray'd into the hands of the *Jews*, in order to be mock'd and derided, buffeted and scourged, and at last sacrificed upon the Cross for our sakes. And can our dying Saviour require any thing of us, that we will not do? Can he speak, and shall not his *last* words be minded by us? What answer do ye think ye should have given him, had ye heard him speaking in this manner to you: "My dearest Children who I love so well, whose miseries I am so deeply concern'd for, whose sins I am so very desirous to get a pardon for, that behold I am just now going to die an ignominious death upon the Cross for you, that so, by the Sacrifice of my self, I may take away all your sins, and make you heirs of eternal Glory. My best and dearest Children, dearer to me than my life it self, Harken to the last words of your dying Saviour; I have but one thing more to require of you: Oh let not that be neglected by you! Let me intreat you, with my last breath, that breath which I am contented to part with for your sakes, to preserve this my last Commandment inviolable! Would ye not all have said, Distrust us not, O blessed Master we beseech thee, command whatsoever thou seest good, and we will cheerfully obey, tho' it be even to death it self. Our hearts are affected with the sense of thy approaching kindness, that we can no more forget thy

"thy dying words, than we can refuse to accept thy
"dying Love.

Secondly, *It is a very easy Command*; take Bread and Wine, bless them, and then eat and drink of them in remembrance of me, is a Commandment as little grievous as our hearts could wish for; so that they who neglect it, have nothing to say in excuse for themselves, but seem to sin purely for sinnings sake, and this is the very height of wickedness. Blessed God, that ever the Devil should so far get possession of mens hearts, as to keep them from doing their duty, even where there is no hardship in doing it. How can these men in reason expect that our Saviour should be at any pains to save them, who are resolv'd they will be at none to obey him? Or rather, how can they not expect to be made the unhappy instances of his wrathful displeasure, who will not do even this small thing to please him?

Thirdly, *This is a Command, in which our obedience to Christ is more peculiarly try'd.* In most other of his commands, there are other obligations besides those of his Authority, as in all moral Duties, obligations from Nature, Reason, or the like; so that it is not very easy to tell, by men's compliance with these, whether they are true Servants of Christ, or no; because they may, nay, and it is plain they sometimes do comply with these Duties, upon principles of Nature or Reason, when yet they have no true sense of their obligation from Christ's authority. But, in the duty before us, there being no obligation, but Christ's positive Institution, they who perform it as they ought, must certainly act upon a true Christian principle, viz. a sense of the obedience they owe to Christ's commands. This then being a plain Test of our being true Christians, it is certainly our duty to let all the world see, by our compliance with it, that we are so; and that the obligation of Christ's Authority, when alone, is abundantly sufficient to command us whithersoever it pleaseth.

Fourthly, *This Command, is a more than ordinary Tryal of our Gratitude and Love to Christ, because it*
com-

commands nothing, but what we are bound even by the mere Laws of Love and Gratitude, to be most ready to perform. For supposing Christ had had no authority to command us any thing; but had only requested of us, that we would perpetually observe this his Supper in commemoration of him; yet considering what great, unspeakably great things, he had done for us, we should have been most inexcusable, if we should not have answer'd this his request. The Laws of Love and Gratitude are founded upon reason, and therefore ought to have a powerful influence upon reasonable creatures; and certainly all that Love and Gratitude can oblige us to, we must be obliged to in behalf of him, who has done more to engage our Love, and deserve our thanks, than all the Friends that we ever had in the World put together. Base and ungrateful wretches then must we needs be, if when he only desires any thing of us, we do not make haste to fulfil his desires; but most especially base and ungrateful, if when he desires of us only, that we would meet together now and then, to commemorate all his kindness towards us, we refuse to hear or regard him, as tho' he were unworthy our remembrance.

Fifthly, *This is a Command, to do a thing vastly for our own good.* So that we must be Fools as well as Rebels, if we omit to do it. Of how much advantage the receiving the Lord's Supper, is to every faithful Christian, you have already seen, and from thence may judge how much it is your interest to receive it: And certainly, where your duty and your interest are so closely link'd together, it must be a strange Spirit of contradiction and rebellion, or at least a strange degree of carelessness and supineness, that can make you forget or neglect your duty. You must have a mighty mind certainly to quarrel with our Saviour, who will rather forego your own interest, than obey his commands.

Sixthly, *This is a Command, in which the honour of God and our Saviour are in a very extraordinary manner concern'd, and which therefore we ought to be most*

particularly careful to observe. For since the Holy Supper was instituted on purpose for the solemn commemoration of the great loving-kindness of God and our Saviour in Redeeming us, and for shewing forth to the World their great Power, Wisdom and Goodness, in the Redemption of us, and likewise the new Title they hereby acquired to our service and obedience; we cannot possibly do any thing more for their honour, than to attend this solemn commemoration, and join with our fellow Christians in acknowledging all Glory, service and obedience to God, *who hath sav'd us, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, and hath bought us with a price; and likewise to our Lord Jesus Christ who was slain, and has redeemed us to God by his blood.* And the refusing to do this, looks as if we did not really believe Christianity; *but counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith we are sanctified, an unholy thing.* And how high an affront this must needs be to God and our Saviour, your own hearts will tell you.

Seventhly, *This is a Command, which tends mightily to procure and promote love and unity amongst Christians,* as has been before prov'd; and upon that account, challengeth a very particular regard and respect from us. Every Member of a Society is in an extraordinary manner obliged to pay a most exact obedience to those Laws, which do more immediately concern the well-being of that Society of which he professeth himself a member; and consequently every Christian must lye under more than ordinary obligations to obey this Command of Christ, concerning his Supper, because the good of the Christian Church in general, is very much concerned in it. It was design'd, and is very fit to unite and bind the members of Christ's Church closer and closer together, and so to strengthen the main body; and those who will not join in this design plainly betray the trust repos'd in them, and as far as they are able, defraud all their fellow members of those blessings of love, peace, mutual friendship, &c. which must have

have been the natural effects of their obedience in this point.

Lastly, *This is a Command, which we are often put in mind of.* We hear of our obligations to it both from the Desk, and from the Pulpit; we read of them in the Church Catechism, and have a sensible remembrance of them, every now and then, at the Communion Table. We are frequently exhorted, intreated, and in the Name of Christ commanded to attend his Holy Supper; we are told of the great danger of neglecting it, and both the mercies and terrors of the Lord are made use of to draw and compel us to it.

And now, if after all this, we still continue obstinate and undutiful, what can we expect but a punishment answerable to our obstinacy? A Punishment that shall no more relent than we have done, but, being deaf to all our prayers and cries for mercy, shall with the same continued torments prey upon us, and be to us the sad remembrancers of our fatal obstinacy to all eternity.

CHAP. II.

Of Preparation for the Lord's Supper.

IN discoursing on this head, it will be convenient, from the very beginning, to distinguish betwixt *necessary* preparation, without which no man ought to come to the Lord's Supper, and such as is only *expedient* or *adviseable* under certain circumstances; it being plain from experience, that for want of this distinction, men have been strangely confounded in their notions about this matter.

To the *necessary* preparation, no doubt those words of St. Paul referr'd, *Corinth. 11. 28. Let a man examine, try or prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that Cup*; because this is laid down at large, as a general rule to all Christians; and it is here plainly supposed that no man ought to eat of
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that bread, and drink of that cup, who has not first examined himself. Examined himself as to what? Our Church tells us in few words, *whether he repents him truly of his former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new life; has a lively Faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death; and is in charity with all Men.*

In which words three things are propounded as necessary qualifications for the worthy receiving the Lord's Supper. First, a sincere and compleat Repentance, which shall not only look backwards with unfeigned sorrow for our sins past, but likewise forward with stedfast purposes of leading a new life for the time to come. Secondly, a lively Faith in God's mercy through Christ, such a firm and hearty persuasion and assurance of God's having redeemed us from sin and death by the death of Christ, and of his having made him our Lord and Master, and promis'd eternal life to us upon condition of our obedience to him, as shall work in us a readiness of mind to serve and obey him in all things, and more especially shall dispose us to commemorate his death, with the highest gratitude and most affectionate Thanksgiving. Lastly, An universal Love and Charity, which shall extend to all men; even our very enemies, and make us not only forgive all their trespasses against us, but likewise bless them, pray for them, and in one word, do them all the good we can.

Now, that every of these is really a necessary qualification for the worthy receiving the Lord's Supper, will most evidently appear, by considering them a little apart. And,

First, as to Repentance, it is plain, even from reason, that without this we must needs be unfit to join in any of God's Ordinances; it being downright Hypocrisy, and a mere mocking of God, to declare our selves his Servants by communicating in these outward Rites of his Religion, when yet at the same time we are not inwardly dispos'd at all to serve him in the most important parts of our duty, *living righteously*

righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world. And therefore we find the Scriptures constantly representing God, as one that abhorreth and abominateth the service of the wicked, and resents their Prayers and sacrifices, their incense and solemn meeting, as abomination and iniquity.

Much less can a wicked man be fit to join in this holy Ordinance of the Lord's Supper; for the end of this being to lament and bewail those sins, which were the occasion of our blessed Lord's death; and to rejoice in that victory, which our Lord by his death obtain'd over sin; he must certainly be a very unfit man to do this, who still taketh part with sin, sheweth a favour and liking to it, and instead of being *Servant to Christ*, is indeed the *Servant of sin*.

Besides, we know the Lord's Supper is a covenanting ordinance, wherein we are to engage our selves to the service of Christ; and God upon supposition of such our engagement, is to make over to us all the benefits of Christ's death and passion, remission of sins, grace to enable us to live according to the Rules of the Gospel, and eternal Salvation upon our so living. But now the wicked man is utterly unqualified for both parts of this Covenant; For how shall he engage himself to the service of Christ, who is not resolv'd to forsake his Sins? Or what Title can he possibly have to the Benefits of Christ's death, who will not perform that obedience, which is a necessary condition of his coming at them? So that such a person can have nothing to do at the Lord's Supper; he is not concern'd in the business of it, and therefore, if he does come to it, must be look'd upon as an intruder, and one that purposely designeth to provoke and affront God. Unto the wicked God saith, *what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my Covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest to be reform'd, and castest my words behind thee.*

Secondly, As to Faith; without this, the Scripture tells us, it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God, he that draweth near to him in any of his ordinances, must believe that he is, and that he is a re-

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murder of them that diligently seek him. God is not to be put off with outward professions and pretences, to be worshipp'd only with our Lips, while our Hearts are far from him: But he is a God of the Heart, a searcher of our Reins, and a tryer of our most inward thoughts: and therefore it will be better for us not to worship him at all, than not to worship him in earnest; never to pretend, by any outward signs, to believe in him, than not to believe as we pretend.

And indeed can any thing possibly be more absurd and ridiculous, as well as blasphemous and provoking, than for those to pretend to commemorate Christ's dying for us, who do not believe one tittle of it? For those to acknowledge him the Saviour of the World, the Lord and Judge of it, who say in their hearts it is no such thing? This is certainly either to question God's Omniscience, or his regard to sincerity, or else to defy his Power; and therefore sure we cannot think this an acceptable service to him.

Besides, are not all the Blessings of the Gospel, which we hope to have confirm'd to us in the Lord's Supper, promised to Believers only? or can we think that the inestimable benefits of Christ's death, are to be had at so cheap a rate, that there is no need either of believing any thing of them, or so much as being thankful for them? No certainly; *the Gospel is the power of God unto Salvation, unto every one that believeth, and to none else; to him that believeth with a lively Faith, (not a Faith without works, which St. James tells us, is dead) and aboundeth therein with thanksgiving.* To what purpose then, but to aggravate his condemnation, shall that man dare to come to the Lord's Supper, in expectation of the Blessings of the Gospel, who is so far from *abounding in Faith with thanksgiving*, that he hath neither Faith nor thanksgiving.

Lastly, As to *Charity*, this is upon many accounts, a necessary qualification for our worthy receiving the Lord's Supper. For First, It cannot be supposed that any man can be fit to commemorate the
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great Love and Kindness of our blessed Lord in dying for us, who is not so far affected with it, as to endeavour all he can to transcribe and imitate it. How great things soever we may say in commendation of it, how much soever we may in words extol it, we shall not be accepted of God, if we in our Actions blaspheme it. And it is in truth no less than to call our Saviour *Fool* in dying for us, when we were his Enemies; to think that we are not obliged to *love, forgive, and help* one another. Either his Love to us had no good grounds and reasons for it, or if it had, and we think so, we ought to shew that we do so, by letting the same grounds and reasons influence our Love. Secondly, Without Charity one of the great ends of our meeting at the Lord's Supper will be defeated, which is to propagate Love and Charity amongst Christians. Thirdly, without this the Scripture assures us, all our Services, all our Gifts and Graces will stand for nothing in the sight of God. *Though we speak with the Tongues of Men, and of Angels, and have not Charity, we are become as sounding Brass or a tinkling Cymbal. And though we have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries and all Knowledge, and though we have all Faith, so that we could remove Mountains, and have not Charity, we are nothing.* Fourthly, without this we are incapable of receiving any benefit from the Lord's Supper; for remission of sins, which must first be obtain'd, before we can hope for any other mercy from God, is promised only to the charitable. *If ye forgive men their Trespases, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if you forgive not men their Trespases, neither will your Father forgive your Trespases.* Lastly, Our blessed Lord has commanded us not to dare to bring any ill will or enmity along with us, when we come to his Supper; nay farther, if we are come to it, and find that we have unawares brought any, to go away and lay them aside, before we presume to partake of it. *If thou bring thy Gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy Brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy Gift before the Altar, and go thy way, first be*

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Thus much is, I think, sufficient to prove that Repentance, Faith and Charity, are necessary qualifications for the worthy Receiving of the Lord's Supper. That they are the only necessary ones is very plain, because they are all that is necessary to Salvation, all that is necessary to give a Man a Title to all the Promises and Blessings of the Gospel; and certainly more cannot be necessary to fit a Man for the Lord's Supper, than to fit him for Heaven; to fit him for the Seal of the Promises, than for the Promises themselves.

But here I shall be asked; If this be all the preparation necessary, how comes it to pass that we have so many Sermons preached, and Books written about setting apart some time, suppose a Week, for private Devotion and Examination, every time before we receive the Lord's Supper? How comes it to pass, that many very good Men if they happen to be disturbed by any worldly business, so that they cannot attend this their weekly preparation, look upon themselves as unfit, for that time, to attend the Holy Communion? To this I answer,

First, that I told you before that there was a preparation, tho' not absolutely necessary, yet, under some circumstances, expedient and adviseable. Where Men have time and other opportunities, it is very commendable in them to do all they can, by reading the Scriptures and other good Books, and by Prayer, and other exercises of Devotion, to excite and encourage, to actuate and quicken all their graces and virtues, that so they may appear, in their best Robes at their Lord's Table. This is such a piece of respect to God and our Saviour, as cannot fail of being well accepted of them. But then,

Secondly, we must be careful not to carry this matter too far, and make other necessary conditions of communicating worthily, besides what God has made. He has no where commanded us to say a certain number of Prayers, to fast so many days, and to ask our selves just so many questions, before we communicate, nor doth the nature of our duty require

require any such thing of us. And if our *Spiritual Pastors* have put us upon these things, they have done it as a matter of prudence and good advice, and not of necessity and absolute Duty; at least, if they have not, they have gone beyond their commission, and departed from the Doctrine of the Church, which solemnly invites all such, *as do truly and earnestly repent them of their sins, and are in love and charity with their neighbours, and intent to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways, to draw near with Faith, and take this Holy Sacrament to their comfort; without asking them whether they have made any farther preparation;*

Lastly, As for those who refrain from coming to the Lord's Supper, because they have been hinder'd from making this particular preparation: let them be never so good and never so wise in other things, yet in this I praise them not. For certainly it is an Argument of a weak mind, and not of a sound Judgment, for men to make to themselves duties, which God and Reason have not made: It is Superstition, and not Religion, for men to place their duty in little niceties and punctilio's, and to overlook the weightier matters of the Law. And yet this they certainly do, who excuse themselves from the great and important duty of communicating, purely upon account of their not having perform'd some little forms and exercises, which nothing but their own fancies and other men's imprudent discourses and examples have made duties. Besides, they do by this means debar themselves from the great and inexpressible benefits of communicating; they omit a most happy occasion of glorifying God and their Saviour, and doing good to their Brethren and themselves, only to humour groundless scruples, and unreasonable curiosities.

Nay, even themselves at other times condemn themselves; they can readily come to other Ordinances, as praying, hearing the Word, &c. without any such preparation as this; and yet this would be every

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ry whit as commendable here, as for the Holy Sacrament. We may *hear and pray*, as well as *receive* unworthily, and yet this they seem not to be much concern'd about; which plainly shows that they are guided in this matter more by example and fancy, than Reason and Religion.

The Sum of all is this. We cannot possibly, by any preparation make our selves too pure, and devout Guests for the Lord's Table; and therefore, when we have opportunity, it will highly become us, by Prayer and other such means, to trim and deck our selves for it. But still we must always remember that the great and only necessary preparation is *Repentance, Faith, and Charity*; a pure innocent mind, a firm and stedfast Faith in Christ, an ardent and impartial affection to our Brethren. Without these, all other preparations are vain and of no account, and with these we are fit guests to receive the Lord's Supper wherever we meet it, tho' never so unexpectedly, and without the least warning. He who is possess'd of these Divine Graces, is always fit, without any further preparation, for Death and Heaven, and then undoubtedly fit for any Means and Ordinances of Religion whatsoever.

But here I shall be ask'd, how a Man can know that he is thus prepar'd? I answer, his own mind must tell him, and if he doth but consult it honestly and with sincerity it will. No body but himself can inform him, whether he be in temper and disposition, in firm purpose and resolution to quit all his sins, without the least reserve, and to endeavour to the utmost of his power to live for the future, as becometh the Gospel of Christ. No body can tell him, what he believeth, what he unfeignedly acknowledgeth to be true, but himself; nor can any other be able to inform him, whether he heartily forgiveth all men their trespasses, and is ready upon all occasions to do them the most good he can. No man knoweth the heart of a man but himself: and he may know it if he be faithful to himself. Otherwise we are in vain call'd upon in Scripture to ex-

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amine our selves, to try our thoughts, and consult our Consciences.

Well, but you have formerly examin'd your self, and thought your self rightly dispos'd in all these points; but you found by your after-behaviour, that you deceiv'd your self, and therefore how shall you trust your self again? I answer, the more sensible you are of any mistake you have formerly made in this matter, the more heedful and watchful over your self ought you to be for the future. It may be your heart was in right temper before, when you thought it so, but you let it slide back afterwards; therefore, *tho' you think you stand now, take heed lest you fall.* It may be you were careless and remiss in examining your self before, and then it is no wonder that you found your self mistaken; therefore be strict and severe with thy self now, that thou may'st be mistaken no more.

But may you venture to go to the Sacrament, immediately upon your conversion from your sins? Must you not stay some considerable time to try, by your Actions, whether your purposes of amendment are sincere or no? Yes, if you cannot trust your self, you had best so to do; if you are in doubt of it you must not dare to mock God. But if after a thorough search and examination of your self, you are fully persuaded, that you are really beginning a new life, and that you shall persevere in it, I see no reason then why you should not come; *come to him that refresheth such as are weary and heavy laden; come to him who having wrought in thee to will, according to his good purpose, will infallibly, if it be not thy own fault, work in thee to do likewise, and so finish the good work, which he has happily and graciously begun in thee.*

We read in the *Acts* of the Apostles, that the new Converts to Christianity, without any time of tryal, were immediately admitted to the Lord's Supper; for so we are told, *Acts 2. that all, the whole three thousand new Converts there mentioned, immediately after their Conversion continued in breaking of Bread,*

Bread, that is, in the Communion of the Lord's Supper. And therefore I can see no reason, why a man that really thinks a true change of mind wrought in him, should not presently, upon his assurance of such a change, from an honest and impartial examination of himself, hope that he is a fit guest for our Lord's Table. Especially considering how kindly the prodigal Son in the Gospel is received and treated by his Father, even immediately upon his return.

I shall add no more, but that I most earnestly beseech men to be very faithful to themselves in this weighty business of Self-examination. They are the only persons that can suffer by making a false judgment of themselves, and therefore it highly stands them in stead, *so to judge themselves, that they be not judged of the Lord; so to search and examine their own Consciences (and that not lightly, and after the manner of dissemblers with God; but so,) that they may come holy and clean to such a heavenly Feast, in the marriage garment required by God in the holy Scripture, and be received as worthy partakers of that holy Table.*

CHAP. III.

Of Frequency of Communicating.

I Shall not here detain you with a long Account how the Primitive Christians communicated at first once a day, then daily for a considerable time, and at length never seldomer than once a week. The state of the Church while in its Infancy, and under Persecution, required then a more frequent Performance of this Duty, for the strengthening and comforting of its members, and for the propagation of the Faith, than now, when it is well grown, and generally spread, and has gotten helps and advantages from secular interest and power. And therefore the Example of the Primitive Christians in this point, Circumstances having much varied between their times and ours, cannot be an exact Rule to us. How-

ever thus much we may very fairly infer from it, that we ought to be frequent in this Duty, tho' not so frequent as they were.

But that which it principally concerns a private Christian to know, as the case stands now, is how often he ought to partake of the Lord's Supper, when administred *in the Parish where he resides*: I say *in the Parish where he resides*, because certainly private Christians are not bound to look further; these being the places in which the Church has commanded them to attend the Ordinances of Religion, and to expect the administration of them.

And the answer to this is very plain and easy: *That we ought not to omit any opportunity, so offered to us of partaking of the Lord's Supper.* For, considering how much our partaking of it is for the honour of God and our Saviour, for the credit of our Religion, the good of the Christian Society, of which we profess our selves Members, and our own particular Interest and Advantage; I cannot see how we can answer it, either to God, our Saviour, our Brethren, or our selves, if we at any time neglect to partake of it. Can we doubt whether it will not be highly displeasing to God, if when he calls us together to give thanks and praise to him, in a most solemn manner, for his abundant mercies in Christ Jesus, we at any time unthankfully refuse to come? Do we think that our Blessed Saviour can take it well at our hands, if when he, by his Ministers, invites us to commemorate his Love in dying for us, we at any time turn our backs upon him, as those who think him not worthy our remembrance? Are we afraid that we shall give too much countenance to our Religion, if we always appear upon this occasion; or that the Church will grow too strong, by our thus often becoming *one bread and one body*? Or do we suspect that we shall be too much gainers by our constant communicating in the blessed Effects of the Body and Blood of Christ. Methinks I am ashamed to ask such questions as these. Oh! with what Joy ought we to run to our Lord's Table whenever

ever we behold it spread for us? How ought the sight of the heavenly Food, there prepared for us, to transport and delight us? How much more eagerly ought we to embrace every opportunity of having the pardon of our sins confirmed; and the promises of Grace and everlasting Life renewed to us, than of heaping up Riches, Honours, or any other worldly good? And yet we are sure to be careful enough to let slip none of these.

But perhaps you will say, certainly there are some times, when a man may be dispensed with from communicating, some reasons which will excuse his absence; and every time of staying from the Lord's Table is not sure to be looked upon as a sin of Omission. I answer, that the Excuses which will avail in this case are very few. That which is commonly made, of want of time for particular Preparation, I have already shewed to be insufficient in the foregoing Chapter: And I know of none that will hold good but these three.

First, In some Parishes the number of Communicants is so vastly great, that they cannot possibly communicate all at one time, at least not with any tolerable conveniency; and in such a case, a good man not only may, but ought to give way and make room for others, who have a right to communicate as well as he. But then we must be very careful that when we do absent our selves upon this Account, there be real ground and reason for it; and that we may be sure of this, we shall do well to consult our Minister about it, who is the most competent Judge in this Matter.

Secondly, It may sometimes so happen, that a man just before the time when he should receive the Lord's Supper, by some sudden and surprizing occasion, may be drawn into some gross and enormous Sin, and not have time enough between that and the Administration of the Sacrament, to recollect and examine himself, to try whether he be truly sorrowful for this his fault, and do sincerely detest and repent of it. And if so, he ought certainly for that

time to stay away, and make his peace with God, and to make himself sure that he has a right to the benefits of Christ's Death and Passion, before he presumeth to come to the Communion of them.

Lastly, Whatever will excuse a man from coming to Church, as Works of Necessity or Charity, being sick and in distress our selves, or attending upon such as are so, and need our help, &c. will, by parity of reason, excuse us from coming to the Lord's Supper. But he who comes to Church, and yet at the same time neglects the Lord's Supper, to which he is there invited, without either of the two fore-mentioned reasons, is inexcusable. And upon this account, I suppose it was, that the Canons Apostolical, and the Synod of *Antioch*, threaten every one of the Faithful with Excommunication, who come to Church to hear the Holy Scriptures, but stay not to partipate of the Holy Supper.

But it may be farther urged, doth not the Law of our Land it self, which obligeth us to communicate three times a year only, suppose this to be sufficient?

I answer, First, that the Law of the Land plainly supposeth it very good and commendable to do it oftner, because it saith, we shall receive it *three times at the least*.

Secondly, if what has been said above concerning the reasons of our omitting no opportunity of communicating, be true, this is enough to oblige us without any farther consideration.

C H A P. IV.

Objections against Communicating answer'd.

H Oping that some men at least are sincere in their Excuses, which they make for not coming to the Lord's Supper, how light and trifling soever the Excuses themselves may be, I shall not grudge my time and pains in considering them distinctly, and giving answers to them. And First, The most
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common excuse which men make in this case is that they are *unworthy*, and therefore dare not communicate; always bearing in mind those terrible words of St. Paul, 1 Cor. 11. 29. *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.* Now in answer to this, I desire men to consider these three things.

First, What it is they mean, when they say they are *unworthy*. For, if they mean any thing to the purpose, they must mean either that they are not sorry for their sins, and fully resolv'd to forsake them, or that they do not stedfastly believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith, or lastly, that they are not in Charity with the World; ready to forgive, and do good to all mankind; for these are the only things which can render a man *unworthy* to receive the Lord's Supper. And yet I verily believe, that the far greatest number of those, who call themselves *unworthy*, would think themselves very much injured, if any of these things should be said of them. Well then, such men give themselves their own answer, they are not really *unworthy*, and therefore they may safely come.

But, say they, we are incumbred mightily with worldly business; we do not find in our selves a zealous and a warm *Faith and Love* of God, our Saviour and Religion; we have contests, disputes and Law-suits with many of our Neighbours, and these things we are afraid render us *unworthy*. By no means: if we pursue our worldly business honestly and fairly, without letting it incroach upon the business of Religion, by swallowing up all our time, and leaving none or very little for the worship of God and service of our Neighbours, we not only do what is innocent, but commendable, and our duty. If we are rooted and grounded in *Faith*, so that in the general course of our lives, we have our conversation as becometh the Gospel of Christ, and keep all his Commandments; this is a sufficient proof of our *Faith and Love* to God, our Saviour and Religion, altho' we never have any hot fits and sudden starts, rap-

tures and extasies. Lastly, If we are contending with our Neighbours for nothing, but what we sincerely think our right, if we take a fair and legal way of righting our selves, and prosecute our suits without the least malice or ill-will to our neighbour's person, there is no harm in all this; none of these things are any bar to our communicating. But,

Secondly, If you are really *unworthy*, whose fault is it that you are so? May you not have, or at least might you not have had for asking, such a measure of Divine Grace, as would sufficiently enable you to attain all those qualifications which are necessary to render a man a *worthy* Communicant; and why then did you not, or why now do you not accept and make use of it? Do you think to make your own fault your excuse? Or will you plead in your behalf that you are not worthy, because you will not be so? No, certainly, all that you can do in this case, is to make what hast you can possibly, by immediately embracing and complying with the offers of God's Grace to become worthy; that so there may lye no fault at your door, either on one side or the other, but that you may both communicate and communicate worthily.

Lastly, As to those terrible words of St. Paul, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself*; I might observe, that the word which we here render *damnation*, signifieth no more than *Judgment*, and probably was design'd in this place only to denote temporal Judgments; but I shall not insist upon this. For whatever the meaning of these words may be, it is certain, that the unworthy receiving the Lord's Supper, till repented of, is a damnable sin; as being a downright impudent mocking of God and Christ, by pretending our selves their Servants, and solemnly vowing all holy obedience to them, when yet in our hearts, we at the same time, mean no such thing. But what then? Shall we therefore stay away from the Communion, and by so doing wilfully break a plain Commandment of our Saviour, and thereby become guilty of
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a damnable sin? This is to take a certain damnation for fear of none, which we may avoid if we please. No certainly, the juster consequence, in this case, is that we ought to use our utmost endeavours to qualify our selves for communicating worthily, that so we may have no reason to fear the dreadful punishment of communicating *unworthily*.

Secondly; Others are afraid of communicating, lest they should fall into sin afterward, and this they think would be unpardonable; for this reason some men have thought it wisdom to abstain from communicating till the time of their death, when they are beyond all danger of sinning more.

Now I readily grant that it is a very great aggravation of any sin, that it is committed after receiving the Holy Communion, because this makes it a sin against new Vows and Promises, which we there made, a sin after greater measures of Grace and Divine Assistance, which we there received, than we had before, and consequently a more inexcusable sin than it would have been before; but that it should be unpardonable is what can never be proved. For,

First, It is certain from our Saviour's own words, *that all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men*. So that unless sinning after Communicating be the sin against the Holy Ghost, which I think was never yet pretended, we need not fear its being forgiven us, upon our sincere Repentance for it, and endeavouring to be more careful for the future. But,

Secondly, Did not St. Peter, after receiving the Communion, nay, and immediately after too, commit sin, and that too one of the greatest sins that he could possibly be guilty of, *the denying his Lord and Master*? and yet no body doubts but upon his sorrow and repentance, this was entirely forgiven him. And ought not this Example to be a great encouragement to all such, as are so unhappy to sin, as he did, upon repentance like his, to hope for a pardon like his too? However,

Lastly, The consideration of this aggravating Circumstance of our sins, ought to make us extremely cautious and fearful of sinning after the Communion; for no wise man will venture himself into an eminent danger, merely because there is a possibility of his escaping out of it.

Thirdly, Others think to excuse themselves by saying that they have already, perhaps often too, been parakers of the Lord's Supper, and been so far from receiving those benefits from it, which we pretend are to be had there, they have not found any benefit at all by it, and therefore they cannot conceive to what purpose they should give themselves the trouble of coming to it any more. To which I answer,

First, That generally speaking, this is not true; it being plain from experience, that most men, even the worst of men too, gain this sensible advantage by communicating, that, for some time both before and after, they are more serious, More thoughtful, and keep themselves within stricter bounds of Temperance and Sobriety, than they us'd to do at other times. And this is a very considerable advantage, and has very often prov'd the happy occasion of men's looking into and examining their own lives, of their finding fault with and becoming sick of themselves, and of their seeking a remedy for their sickness, in a thorough Repentance and Retormation.

Secondly, If men do not find these benefits which we assure them of, in the *Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ*, it must be wholly their own fault, for God is faithful who hath promised, and will infallibly make good his part of the Covenant, to all those who are careful to make good theirs. So that this objection, so far as it is true, is an objection only against our selves; it can be no reason for our absenting from the Holy Communion, but it may and ought to be a powerful reason for our taking care to come so prepared, that we may be fit to receive the blessings there offer'd by God to us.

Thirdly, Men are apt to judge of the effects of their receiving the Communion before (according o
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the nature of things) they can possibly appear. God's Grace, tho' it works in a supernatural manner, yet it attends the natural motion of mens own endeavours, works and keeps equal pace along with them. And therefore our Reason will tell us, that it must take up some time to watch and observe the effects of it. The conversion of a Sinner, and perfection of a Saint, are not things to be wrought in a moment: there are a great many little steps and degrees to be taken and gain'd, which are almost insensible, at least do not become remarkable, till they have been often added one to another; and therefore we must wait with patience, and keep on doing our own business, and then in time we need not fear but the works of the Lord will be made perfect in us. We can no more argue that we do not grow in Grace, because we do not see every small increase of such our growth, than that we do not grow in bodily stature, for the same reason. But,

Lastly, Supposing no benefits at all were to accrue to us, from our receiving the Lord's Supper: What then? Are we to obey none of our Saviour's Commandments, but such as we are to be gainers by? Is it not enough that he has plainly enjoin'd us to do this? Are not his Power and Authority sufficient grounds and motives for our obedience? Moreover, are we never to minister to the glory and honour of God and our Saviour, but where we can at the same time minister to our own profits too? This, methinks, is strange Doctrine, especially in a Christian's mouth, who promised at his Baptism, without reserve, to keep all God's Commandments, and to walk in the same unto his lives end.

Fourthly, Another Objection comes from those men, who do not care to communicate with ill men, who they see constantly flock to the Lord's Table: much less to receive the Communion from the hands of an ill Minister, as it may sometimes happen. But this I hope to shew to be rather an affected niceness and squeamishness, than well-grounded Wisdom and Religion. For,

First, As to Lay-Communicants, supposing them to be ill men, which yet Charity, especially such Charity as a man ought to bring with him to the Communion, commandeth you to be well assured of before you suppose it; yet, what is that to you? are you bound to answer for their unworthiness in receiving, or for the sins they shall be guilty of after? are you afraid that they are infectious, and that you shall catch their sins of them, only by looking on them, or kneeling by them? if not, what means this foolish nicety, these groundless scruples? would it not become you better when you meet such men at the Lord's Table, to hope that they are now beginning to repent, and amend, and to wish and pray that it may be so? ought you not rather to embrace and welcome them with joy thither, as the Angels do a repenting sinner, and to lay hold of this occasion of encouraging them to love thy self, and other good men, as that which may afterwards prove a likely means of making them love that Religion, to which thou and they owe all their goodness. This certainly would be the properest behaviour at this Feast of Love: this Charity of thine to them would nearest resemble that of thy Lord to thee.

But you will say, perhaps, that the thoughts of that extreme danger, which they incur by coming unworthily to the Lord's Table, and their cold and indifferent behaviour there, discompose thy thoughts and deaden thy devotions. Be it so; yet this is not thy fault but theirs, so far as they are the necessary occasion of it. But surely it will be no hard matter for thee to divert thy thoughts from them at such a time, and by meditation and private Prayer to apply them to the business thou art about. Nay, the very thoughts of the great danger of communicating unworthily and indecently, which you say these men bring into your mind, are very proper thoughts at that time. Add to this, that our Lord himself gave the Communion to *Judas*, as bad a Man as we can well suppose, and the rest of the Apostles made no objection against his Communicating; and who art thou

thou then that pretendest to be wiser than our Lord and his Apostles?

Secondly, As to an ill *Minister*. This Objection might be of some Force, if the Virtue and Efficacy of the Communion did at all depend upon the goodness or badness of him who administred it; but this it doth not. It is enough that he be lawfully ordain'd and impowred to minister to us in Holy things; farther considered as to his goodness or badness, there is no more in the Case betwixt him and us, than in the case betwixt us and any other Lay-Brother, and this, I hope, has been sufficiently consider'd.

Fifthly, It is objected by some, that they cannot come to the Lord's Supper, as administred by the Church of *England*, because they cannot comply with the posture of kneeling, in which that enjoyns them to receive it. But why can they not comply?

Is it because the posture is in it self unlawful? That they will be hardly so foolish as to say; it being acknowledged by all Mankind that postures are indifferent things; and the practice of the best men that ever lived, nay, even of our Lord himself, having plainly prov'd that there is no unlawfulness in this of kneeling.

Is it because the supreme Authority of our Nation has commanded it? (for the Rubricks of our Common Prayer, are all Acts of Parliament, and by these we are commanded to kneel at the Communion: a thing which I wish some men would seriously lay to heart) this methinks must be strange perverseness, to refuse to obey our Governors in indifferent things, the only things in which our obedience to them can be try'd.

Is it because this was not the posture in which our Lord instituted this Holy Supper? How do they know that? for the Scriptures are silent in that matter; but supposing it was not, do these men think us obliged to observe all the circumstances which our Lord then made use of? If not all, why more particularly this of his posture? If all, why then do they themselves vary so much from many of them, as they do? Why do not they make ready the Lord's

Sup-

Supper in an upper Room; why not at the same time of the day which he did?

Is it because kneeling is no Table gesture? I answer, that the nature of the Lord's Supper doth not require that it should be so; if it did, it would likewise, for the same reason, require other Circumstances proper to a Feast and a Table, which yet they who make this objection, will by no means allow of, so that in this they give themselves their answer.

Is it because kneeling is not a proper posture, not suitable to the business of communicating? Certainly the most proper of any whatsoever; as serving best amongst us, to express that humility and thankfulness of mind, with which we receive and commemorate, as we ought to do, the benefits of Christ's death and passion. Or,

Lastly, Is it because this posture is abused to very ill purposes by Idolaters, more especially by the Papists in this very instance of communicating? I answer, that the abuse of an indifferent thing, can be no argument against the lawful use of it, more particularly the use of it to very good and commendable ends.

Sixthly and Lastly, There is one other Objection; which tho' very seldom mentioned, yet I fear lyeth at the bottom of many Mens Hearts, and that is, giving away Money at the Communion. But here it is to be consider'd, that altho' this is a very good expression of that charity, which we are indispensibly bound to bring with us thither, yet this is no necessary condition of, or qualification for, our worthy receiving. Those who have nothing or very little to give, have equal right to the Communion, and will be made as welcome at it by our Saviour, as they who give never so largely out of their abundance. Let not any man then neglect this happy opportunity of doing honour to God and his Saviour, and unspeakable good to himself and his Brethren, purely because he cannot make such a show with his Money as other men. Let him give chearfully what he is able, and he need not fear but that our Saviour, who

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so much commended the Widow's Charity in her *Mite*, will likewise accept and approve his? Or if he has nothing else to offer to God, yet let him offer him a penitent faithful and charitable heart; and this he will find dear and precious in his sight.

And thus I have answer'd, I hope fully and clearly, all those Objections which men ordinarily make against communicating; at least all such as occur to my mind at present. If there be any others that have escaped me, I shall be very thankful to those who will be so kind as to inform me of them, and most readily give them their due weight and consideration.

*Three Prayers to be us'd by such as have
Leisure every Morning and Evening
with their other Devotions, for a Week
before they receive the Lord's Supper.*

For Repentance.

O Most Holy Lord God, who art of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity ; and has more especially required, that those who compass thine Altar, should wash their Hands in Innocency : Grant me, I beseech thee, unfeigned Repentance for my past Sins, a most deep and hearty Sorrow for them, and most firm and stedfast Purposes and Resolutions to forsake them ; and do thou by thy Grace so assist and strengthen these my Resolutions, that they may become effectual, for the bringing forth Fruit unto Holiness, so that in the End I may have Everlasting Life. Thou only, O Lord, art able to work in me both to will and to do, according as I ought. Cleanse me therefore, I most humbly pray thee, from all Filthiness, both of Flesh and Spirit, and enable me so to perfect Holiness in thy Fear, that I may be a fit Guest for thy Son's Table, and likewise meet to be Partaker of that Inheritance of the Saints in Light, which thou, in thine
in

infinite Mercy, has promis'd to all such as faithfully serve and please thee, through thy dear Son, and our alone Saviour and Redeemer Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For Faith.

O Most gracious and ever merciful Lord, who hast promised to all them that believe in thy Son Jesus, everlasting Life, and hast instituted and ordained holy Mysteries, as Pledges and Seals of these thy Promises: Give me I most earnestly beg of thee, such a sure and lively Faith in him, as may entitle me to become a worthy Receiver of these Pledges, and Heir of these Promises. I believe, O Lord, help thou my Unbelief; I believe that the blessed Jesus laid down his Life for me, and acknowledge with all possible Thankfulness, his inexpressible Kindness in so doing; I believe that he gave himself for me and all Mankind, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works; therefore will I endeavour to manifest my Faith by my Works. I believe that there is none other Name under Heaven, given among Men, whereby they must be saved, but the Name of the Lord Jesus; therefore in his Name only I implore thy Mercy, Increase of Faith here, and of Glory hereafter. *Amen.* *For*

For Charity.

O Lord, who hast taught us that all our doings without Charity are nothing worth; send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into my Heart that most excellent Gift of Charity, the very Bond of Peace and of all Virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee. More especially now, when I am going to commemorate the unspeakable Love of my blessed Saviour in dying for me, let me not be destitute of Love towards my Brethren. O let my Readiness to forgive others their Trespases, fit me for thy Forgiveness of mine; let me not be an Enemy to any Man, lest I be thy Enemy too; but give me that Charity, which covereth a multitude of Sins, that Charity, by which all Men may know me to be Christ's Disciple, which shall dispose me to be of a meek, patient, long suffering, forgiving Temper, like him, and to do good to all Men as he did; that Charity which shall never fail, but shall go along with us into, and make us fit Inhabitants for that City of Love, the new *Jerusalem*. Grant this, O merciful Father, for the sake of thy Son Christ Jesus, through whose Love alone we are encouraged to present these our Requests to thee. *Amen.*

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*A Prayer to be said in the Morning before
we communicate, after our usual Prayers.*

O Most gracious and ever merciful Lord God, who art always wont to give more than we either desire or deserve, accept, I beseech thee, my most humble and hearty thanks for thy great Mercy in bringing me to the Light of this Day, and thereby giving me an Opportunity of meeting my dear Redeemer at his holy Table; of testifying my Love and Gratitude to him, and of communicating in all the blessed Effects of his Love towards me; of renewing to him my Baptismal Vow of Faith and Obedience, and of receiving from him fresh Confirmations of the Benefits made over to me in my Baptism, even Remission of Sins, Grace, and eternal Life. O that I may be careful duly to improve this happy Opportunity now before me! that I may eat and drink so worthily, as to eat and drink my own Salvation! that my Sins which are many and great, more especially all such as have been committed knowingly and wilfully, (*such as --- Here mention those wilful sins, if there are any such, which thou knowest thy self to have been guilty of*) may be forgiven me; and that henceforward, whether I live, I may live unto thee, so whether I dye, I may dye unto thee, that so living or dying, I may be ever thine. And

And the same Mercies, which I beg for my self, I beg likewise for all my fellow Christians; more particularly those who shall this Day, any where, partake in the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. O let not one of their precious Souls perish, who seem to be so near to the Kingdom of Heaven; but do thou, by thy Grace so assist and direct, strengthen and support them, now and evermore, in doing thy Will, and working out their own Salvation, that in the end they may obtain everlasting Life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A short Prayer to be said after that which we commonly say at our first coming into the Church.

GRANT, O blessed Jesu, that the nearer I draw to thy Table, the nearer I may likewise draw to thee in Purity of Heart and Affections, in Strength and Liveliness of Faith, in Fervency and Extensiveness of Charity. That so, being of the same Mind which was in thee, and thinking, believing, and doing, as becometh thy Disciple, I may be meet to be Partaker of those Pledges of thy Favour, which thou now offerest at thy holy Table to all thy faithful Servants, and of those Joys in another World, which thou in thy Mercy hast prepared for them. *Amen.*

Just

Just before we receive.

H Ear those Prayers, O Lord, which have been offer'd up by the Congregation, and for the sake of thy well beloved Son Jesus Christ, suffer us to draw nigh unto thee, and to hope for thy mercy. In his Name alone it is that I, a most vile wretch and miserable Sinner, am bold to call thee Father, and to intreat thy favour and forgiveness. O let his Merits answer for my unworthiness, let his Death preserve me from dying, let his Body and Blood preserve my Body and Soul unto everlasting life. *Amen.*

Immediately after receiving the Bread.

O Merciful Lord, Grant, I beseech thee that by virtue of thy dear Son's Body given for me, and represented to me by this Bread, I may become acceptable in thy sight, obtain thy pardon and peace, thy grace and assistance, thy everlasting happiness and glory. And do thou, O Lord, so fill my heart with thankfulness for the inestimable benefits of my Saviour's death and passion, that I may be ready to do any thing, even to lay down my life for him; and that loving nothing more than him, he may vouchsafe to think me worthy of him, and to crown me with eternal Glory in his Kingdom. *Amen.* *Imme-*

Immediately after receiving the Wine.

I Thank thee, from the bottom of my heart, O gracious God, that thou hast redeemed us to thy self by the Blood of thy Son ; O let me evermore bear in mind thy inexpressible kindness and condescension in so doing ; and shew forth my sense of them, in a sincere, universal and constant obedience to thee. That so the Lord Jesus may be indeed the Author of Salvation to me, and I being wash'd and cleans'd from all my sins in his Blood, may appear pure and spotless before thee, and be admitted to partake of those rivers of pleasure, which are at thy right hand for evermore. *Amen.*

When you return to your Seat.

Grant, O blessed Lord, that I and all those who meet together this day under pretence of commemorating thy death, may so effectually remember it, as for ever after to hate those sins, which were the occasion of it ; so effectually remember it, as constantly to love and adore thee for it ; so effectually remember it, as to use our utmost endeavours to imitate and transcribe it ; so effectually remember it, as to remember that we are thine, bought with the price of thy Blood, and are therefore bound to serve thee, with our Bodies and Spirits, which are thine. *Amen.* A

A Prayer to be used the Evening after communicating, with our other Devotions.

A Ccept, O Blessed Lord, accept my unfeigned thanks, for thy great mercy in admitting me this day to the sweet and comfortable Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, and for all those Benefits which I there receiv'd. Enable me for the future to live worthy of them, to make good all the promises and vows I there made, and to continue stedfast in that Repentance, Faith, and Charity, which I there profess'd. Marvellous was thy love in sending thy Son to die for us, and particularly great has it been towards me, in that it has caus'd me to be born in a Christian Country, where I had early and easy opportunities of knowing the Christian Religion, and that too in its utmost purity and simplicity, and have long been protected and maintain'd in the free and undisturb'd exercise of it. Oh that my behaviour may prove answerable to these mercies; that I may use all these happy opportunities, which many other poor Souls want, as one that is truly sensible of the advantage of them; that I may grow in Grace, and the knowledge of Christ Jesus, and abound in every good word and work, to the praise and glory of God. I know, O Lord, that if we sin wilfully, after that we have receiv'd the know-

46. *The Great Duty of, &c.*

knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation. O let me constantly carry this in my thoughts, and seriously reflect upon it, that so I may not be of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the Soul.

I pray likewise, that all my fellow Christians may sincerely perform that Covenant, which they have this day made to thee; that they cease to do evil and learn to do well, that they may be strong in the Faith of Christ; and love one another, as he hath loved them; that so thy Honour may be effectually promoted, the Salvation of all men farther'd, thy Son's Kingdom enlarg'd, and his coming hastned, to the inexpressible comfort and eternal joy of all those, who having sincerely obey'd the Gospel of Christ here, shall evermore rejoice in the blessed fruits and rewards of their Obedience in Heaven. Grant this, O merciful Father, for the sake of thy well-beloved Son Christ Jesus, to whom, with thy Self, and eternally blessed Spirit, three Persons but one God, be all Honour and Glory, Might, Majesty and Dominion, from this time, henceforth and for evermore. *Amen.*

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The END.

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